8:Howell E, G-5 (1942-1944)1954
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

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Disputes are easily settled by the courts, though execution of judgement is often slow.

Loans Arising from the Institution of Nak

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Slightly different situations arise from the institution known as '*nak*'.[1] It appears probable that *nak*—the common word meaning 'to kill', but in this context meaning 'a slaughter'—was part of the tribal ceremonies concerned with the division of age-sets. Age-mates of the younger age-set would segregate themselves from the rest of the community at the cattle-byre of one of their number and live entirely on the meat of oxen slaughtered for the occasion.

Two or three of the youths would club together to provide an ox and, if their immediate relatives were unable to supply one, they would appropriate one from someone else. In this they were given considerable licence and, should the owner object, they could seize it with impunity. Public opinion would not allow the owner to resist, and certainly he would be unable nowadays to obtain immediate redress in the courts. In return, the youths are bound by convention, with the full force of public opinion behind it, to make return after a specified number of years (usually announced by the *wut ghok*).

The exchange values of cattle provided in this manner are much higher than those recognized in normal exchanges or loans. They are:

1 large bull = 2 cow-calves and 1 bull-calf.
1 medium bull = 2 cow-calves.
1 bull-calf = 1 cow-calf.

The debts were not, of course, discharged with the rigidity which these rates imply, but they are quoted by Nuer as being traditional. Just as a man is expected to hand over his ox without show of reluctance in the first place, so would his debtors be expected to discharge their obligations without argument. Nuer are particularly emphatic on this point, but disputes are, none the less, frequently taken to court.

Nearly all these exchanges are necessary to meet some ritual situation, and are therefore of frequent occurrence. Sacrifice is extremely common, and Nuer consume more meat than is commonly supposed. Recent statistics indicate that a large proportion of the total cattle population is slaughtered.[2]

Exchange of Cattle for Grain

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Finally, cattle are sometimes exchanged for grain in times of famine. This has not been so frequent in recent years, because grain, imported

[1] I have discussed this institution in more detail in an article, 'The Age-set System and the Institution of "Nak" among the Nuer', *S.N.R.*, 1948.
[2] See Jonglei Investigation Team, *Progress Report, 1948–9*.

9:Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936)1936 FJ22 Nuer FJ22

858 561 mode of life changes when he becomes a man, that is to say when he is made a man by social machinery, for he does not become a man in virtue of biological condition alone. An initiated boy ceases also to assist women and girls in the more menial tasks of cattle culture. It is no longer his duty to clear dung from the byres nor to smear it on the floor of the kraals[1] and dry it for fuel. Neither taboo nor shame attaches to these tasks, it is true, and if there are no women or boys to perform them a man will do them himself, but it is considered to be work for boys and girls. No more will an initiated boy have to milk the goats and sheep and take them out to pasture with the calves. Instead he will sometimes guard the main herd of cattle in their dry season pastures or more generally sit and gossip around the embers of a smouldering dung fire and wait for the womenfolk to bring him the morning meal.

A boy is everybody's servant. Not only must he milk the cattle and sheep and goats and keep clean byre and kraal but he is frequently ordered about by initiated men, sent to draw water, fetch fuel, light pipes, made to go messages, to lead the bullocks round the camp when his elders wish to leap (*raw*) behind them, and to perform any other task which they require. Certainly boyhood is the period in a man's life when he is more occupied, does more work, than at any other period of his life. One gets the impression when living in a Nuer cattle camp that among the males all the routine work of the camp is done by the boys. After initiation 884 561 461 a boy may look forward to a long life of ease. His are now the delights of sitting round a smouldering dung fire with his beloved cattle tethered in front of him. Here he can smoke, sleep, drink milk, gossip, and watch others do the daily monotonous routine work of homestead, dairy, and kraal. There is no one now to disturb his peace by ordering him about. At last he is completely his own master and may work or not as he thinks fit. Every initiated Nuer is his own lord, paying respect to age and the obligations of kinship, but free and independent, owing no man service. A newly initiated boy may now order his juniors about, see that they do their work thoroughly, and admonish and beat them if they are remiss 884 561 in any task. Even though he is quite small, and perhaps no older than many who are uninitiated, he is a *wut*, a man, while they are *dholi*, boys.

[1] "Byre" refers to the large huts in which cattle are housed in the wet season and which is used also as a men's club. "Kraal" is used to denote the space in front of the byre, sometimes enclosed, where the cattle are tethered and also for the space where they are tethered, surrounded by a wind-screen, in dry-season camps.

9:Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936)1936 F322 Nuer F322

He will respect his elders but they will treat him as a man and with the consideration due to an equal rather than to an inferior.[1] 884 561

He has now the supreme joy, to which every Nuer boy looks forward with longing, of entering into the full life of the cattle. He will wander with them over their dry season pastures and will have his own bullock, perhaps more than one, to meet when it returns to camp in the evening, strutting along and waving the long tassel attached to its horns as it tosses its head. He will rub its back with ashes in the evening and perhaps invoke the spirit of his lineage or his dead ancestors as he does so. He may now order a boy to lead his bullock round the camp at morning or evening so that he can leap behind it in the sight of the girls, and may walk among the cattle at night ringing a cattle bell and singing about his cattle, his relatives, and his loves, activities which would be mere presumption in a boy, who would not indeed attempt them.

The elation, the feeling of happy superiority, which accompany this change in a boy's life are evident in his behaviour, and their opposites are strikingly shown in the cases of boys who for some reason have not been initiated at the same time as their contemporaries and playmates. The position of such a boy is pathetic. His friends have been promoted and he is left behind. They are men and he is still a boy. Once his equals they have become his superiors. I knew well one boy in this humiliating position and it was painful to observe how acutely he felt it on occasions. He evidently felt shame at the performance of his boys' duties and tried to associate as much as possible with his initiated companions, with whom he had everything in common, rather than with the smaller boys with whom he was socially identified. I think that his friends tried to spare him humiliation as far as they could by treating him as one of themselves though his work and play were of necessity different from theirs. On one occasion a man of about 16 years of age was beating the boys for neglecting their work and idling around my tent, but when he came to this boy of the same age as himself he raised his hand to strike him and said: "And you! what are you doing here?" but he smiled and did not strike him.

After initiation also a boy may give himself over to the absorbing interests of love-making. He may now dance and flirt (*laau*) and indulge 836 883

[1] We must not exaggerate this equality. Elder men will still call an initiated person who is young enough to be their child *dhol*, boy, and will order him to fetch them things they require. I have on dozens of occasions witnessed it. But the difference lies between doing a favour to an older man who speaks to you as his son and being ordered about like a servant by a superior.

9:Evans-Pritchard E-3 (1931, 1936)1936 F222 Nuer F222

836 883 in sexual relations with girls. Before initiation boys may go to dances but they merely watch and do not take part in them. After initiation they go with the other youths of the village and form part of the dancing group of their lineage (*dap*). When the dancing is over they seize the hands of the girls and sit and flirt with them.[2] A boy will now commence permanent love affairs with girls, and a girl will be recognised by his friends as his love (*kwaak*). No uninitiated boy would stand a chance of having a relationship of this kind with a girl, however large he might be, as she would merely laugh at him and call him a boy and tell him to go and become initiated. It is true that boys before initiation will have congress with small girls, but this is not socially recognised, and if his elders hear of it they will tell him not to be a fool as he is only a boy, but after initiation it is not only none of their business what he does, but also he is expected, nay, compelled, by custom to embark upon courtship.

411 •884 421 An initiated boy is now invested with two external signs of manhood besides the scars on his forehead. He is given a spear by his father and also a bullock, which he had generally been promised before the operation. If he is lucky he will also get a bullock from a maternal or paternal uncle. A boy will seldom possess a spear of his own and if he carries one he will almost certainly be found to have borrowed it from a relative though he may become the owner of a fishing spear. The possession of a spear is a sign of manhood and it is an object of great pride. One is surprised at the real feeling a Nuer expresses for his spear, almost as though it were animate and not a mere weapon. He is never tired of sharpening and polishing it. It is always in his hand, not only when fighting, hunting and travelling, but also when dancing, leaping behind his bullocks, playing with his comrades, and even when he lays it down it is never far from his side. As the Nuer possess no knives a man's spear does service not only on those occasions when Africans generally make use of it, but on those occasions when other peoples use a knife, for culinary purposes, cutting leather in tether making, cutting ox's hide for a bed-rug, and other purposes.

233 554 553 421 A boy is even prouder when he becomes the owner of a bullock and is invested with a bullock name. Even a small boy will speak of his father's bullocks as "our bullocks," and will often regard one of them, the calf of the cow he habitually milks, as his own special one. But it is only his in the general psychological sense of family communism. It

ii:Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1945
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

takes his pater's place in society and becomes head of his pater's *gol* (household). If his genitor is wise he will respect his son's independent status and will build him a byre next to his own and give him the cattle to which he is heir. When the genitor acts honestly difficulties between himself and his dead brother's son do not arise. His nephews (natural sons) will retain their respect and affection for him and will share their cattle with him. But Nuer are very greedy where cattle are concerned and the temptation to use a dead brother's herd to marry wives for himself during the minority of his sons is often more than a man can resist. This does not matter if he obtains the consent of the widow and explains what he is doing to his small sons and later, when they grow up, provides cattle for their marriages from his own herd. But Nuer say "Women have weak characters and cannot stand up against a man's will" and the genitor may put undue pressure on the widow to get her consent to use his dead brother's cattle for his own purposes, or even act without it. When the sons grow up he finds that he has no cattle left for them to marry with and they are resentful and want to know what has happened to their father's herd. Likewise their uncle may use the cattle of their sisters' marriages for his own purposes while they are still minors and they will not easily forgive this breach of trust when they grow up and want to marry. A son in this position is unlikely to move away from the village in which he has been brought up because this is his own village where his agnatic kinsmen live, but his relations with his uncle may become strained and he may harden in his insistence on his full legal rights in future instead of accepting a friendly give-and-take arrangement. If exasperated beyond endurance he may go to live with his maternal uncles. Conflicting loyalties often make a boy's position difficult, for as a son he feels he ought to respect and obey his "father" and as a nephew he feels he ought to insist on his rights.

Trouble is more likely to arise when a boy falls under the guardianship of his dead pater's brother and is not begotten by him. As explained elsewhere uncles frequently abuse their trust and dissipate the dead man's herd and in these circumstances his sons are almost certain to rebel when they become men.

The correct procedure is for the uncle and guardian to build a byre for his nephew and ward as soon as he is initiated and to hand over to him his dead father's cattle since he has now become head of an independent household. It is a great event when a boy comes of age and can take his dead father's place. The *gol* (household) once again has its head. The *luak* (byre) is once more occupied. The *mar* (fire) of the dead man has been rekindled. It is a day of great joy to the mother and of pride to the boy's kinsmen.

This correct procedure is well illustrated in the case of Ging ♂—Ging ♂ who was resident at Nyueny during my visit, at the home of Dhoal (Homestead No. XX), his sister's husband. His father was killed in fighting some years ago and he was brought up at the home of his mother's lover, Liep ♂—Deng ♂ of Kar village. When he was old enough to be initiated his dead father's brother brought him back to his paternal village

II:Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1945
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604 428 884 of Tutgar so that the rite might be performed there for it is a dishonour to a boy's agnatic kinsmen if it is not performed in their village and nothing more strongly binds a boy to them than the knowledge that they undertook the expenses of his initiation and the remembrance of the place where he suffered so great pain to win his manhood. After his initiation Ging ♂'s uncle built him a byre and handed over to him his father's cattle. Although he is only a small boy he is a *guan cieng*, an independent householder. I used often to talk to him and he was very proud of his position and of having a byre and cattle of his own, and evidently liked and respected his uncle. By acting straightly with Ging his uncle firmly attached him to his father's people and though he pays, and will continue to pay, frequent visits to his mother and his foster-father he will never desert his agnatic kinsmen among whom he has his byre and herd.

The heritage of children must be respected. Thus, to give one more example: the widow, Nyaruithni ♀ (Homestead No. VIII), has her own byre where her dead husband's cattle are herded by her brother's son, Gai ♂. The byre and herd are being held in trust for her little son, Malith ♂, and when he is initiated he will assume sole charge of them. In a case of this kind it would be impossible for one of his maternal uncles to use the cattle during his minority for the others would not allow him to do so. Moreover, this would be a serious offence in Nuer eyes because when Nyaruithni ♀ was married they received her bride-cattle and it would be very wrong to add to these cattle those of her children. The husband's kinsmen would strongly object. Probably Malith ♂ will let Gai ♂ have a few cows to help him marry but this will be a gift out of affection and of gratitude for his services.

The difference between this case and that of Ging ♂ is that in Malith's case his maternal relatives are acting as his guardians whereas in Ging's case it was his paternal relations who were his guardians. It remains to be seen, however, whether Malith's paternal relations show sufficient interest in the boy to bring him to their home to be initiated. If they do this he will probably join them for good.

X

604 428 The opposition between the legal family and the biological family is most evident when a son is born in widow-concubinage. The opposition is clearer, and hence the sociological interest greater, because in ghost-marriage and leviritic marriage the genitor is a legal substitute for the pater whereas the genitor of a child born in widow-concubinage has no legal status as pro-pater. If the pater's brothers are alive and family feeling is strong they are likely to insist on his sons being initiated in their home and living with them after initiation. They may also bring his daughters to live with them and marry them from their home. The genitor cannot deny them their right when they tell him *Garena goat ghok ko*, "We want the children of our cattle". Thus it often happens that a boy is brought up amid one social group but belongs legally to a different social group. The sentiments of childhood attach him to the home of his mother and genitor and while he is small he does not think of